

Character Value Analysis

Directions: Read each of the following scenarios and answer the questions that follow.

Scenario #1

Katniss Everdeen lives in District 12 of Panem, a country consisting of the wealthy Capitol and twelve districts in varying states of poverty. Every year, two children—called tributes—are chosen from each district to participate in a compulsory annual televised death match called The Hunger Games.

Katniss lives with her mother and younger sister, Prim. Her father died years ago in a mining accident. Since her father's death, Katniss has been the person in charge of taking care of her family. In order to help them survive, she illegally crosses the district's fence and goes into the forest to hunt. Although her friend Gale suggests they run away, Katniss could never abandon her family.

This year, Prim is eligible to be selected for the Hunger Games for the first time. At the Reaping—the event where one boy and one girl are chosen to represent the district in the Games—the unthinkable happens: Prim is selected as tribute. Immediately after Prim's name is called, Katniss volunteers as tribute, deciding to spare Prim's life by taking her place in the Games.

- a) *What significant choice does Katniss make in this scenario?*
- b) *What does Katniss's choice suggest about what she values?*

Scenario #2

Malik is a thirteen-year-old African-American boy living in downtown Houston. He moved there with his mother and four sisters to follow his mother's most recent boyfriend, only to be abandoned by that boyfriend once they arrived. As usual, Malik's mother has to care for the family on her own, working two jobs just to make ends meet.

Since moving to Houston, Malik has been having a tough time at his school. A group of boys has been relentlessly bullying him, making fun of his falling-apart discount sneakers. Malik has tried asking his mother for new shoes, but she can't afford the popular sneakers all the other students have. Malik doesn't want to disrespect his mother, but he's frustrated that her poor choices have led to him not being able to get what he wants.

When Malik's neighbor, a member of a group called the Bullets, offers to help, Malik hesitates. He's not sure if getting involved with the Bullets is a good idea. But his neighbor eventually convinces him to seek the group's help. Malik visits the Bullets, and they take him to get a new pair of sneakers. However, instead of heading to a store, they go to a basketball court and find a boy practicing alone. They assault the boy and take his shoes, offering them to Malik. Malik is shocked and refuses the shoes. He even helps the basketball player escape before he runs away from the Bullets himself. However, he can't help but think about the shoes he left behind. He decides to return to the court the next day, just in case the shoes are still there.

- a) *What significant choice does Malik make in this scenario?*
- b) *What does Malik's choice suggest about what he values?*

Scenario #3

Growing up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Michael Griswald had loved going to his grandfather's house. It was right on the water, and Michael and his grandfather went fishing and crabbing all the time. Michael especially enjoyed spending time with his grandfather because it gave him a chance to get away from his own home, where more often than not his parents were fighting. Michael's dad had never hit Michael, but he had gotten into physical fights with Michael's mother, who never managed to kick out her abusive husband completely. Michael felt most uncomfortable when the police visited his house after a report of a domestic dispute, and his friends asked him about it the next day.

So when a rich family from Annapolis bought Michael's grandfather's land and started to build a fancy new home, Michael was upset. He still took his friends to hang out on the land, but one time Mr. DiAngelo, the new owner, found them and kicked them off. Michael didn't like that this snobby rich guy forced him off his grandfather's land – a place he loved – even if Mr. DiAngelo did own it now. Michael decided to get some payback.

Michael knew that Mr. DiAngelo had bought an expensive new kayak. One day Michael "borrowed" his friend Brady's father's drill and put three holes in the kayak. He didn't want to hurt Mr. DiAngelo – he just wanted the rich guy to take a swim the next time he went out on the water. However, Mr. DiAngelo's wife and four-year-old son were the ones who used the kayak next. The kayak sunk, and Ben DiAngelo suffered from hypothermia and died. Michael asked his friends never to tell anyone what he had done.

- a) *What significant choice does Michael make in this scenario?*
- b) *What does Michael's choice suggest about what he values?*

Scenario #4

Even though slavery had ended in the South almost 50 years before, life in rural Mississippi in the 1930s wasn't easy for African-Americans. Caroline Logan had never been a slave herself, but her parents had. She grew up in a world without slavery, but discrimination was still very real. Just last week a group of white men tarred and feathered a black man, Sam Tatum, who had questioned the amount of money he owed to a white storeowner.

Almost 70 years old, Caroline had lived with this kind of discrimination a long time. She was aware of the danger some white people posed, but she also accepted it as part of the reality of the world in which she lived.

Recently Caroline went to Strawberry, the local town, to conduct some business, and she took a couple of her grandkids along. While Caroline went to see her lawyer, her granddaughter, Cassie, accidentally bumped into a white girl, Lillian Jean Simms. Lillian Jean demanded an apology, which Cassie reluctantly gave. But that wasn't enough for Lillian Jean. Lillian Jean insisted that Cassie walk in the street so she wouldn't run into "decent white folks." Cassie refused to do this, but then Lillian Jean's father got involved. He twisted Cassie's arm behind her back, forced her into the road, and said that Cassie had better apologize to his daughter.

At this point, Caroline found Cassie and saw what was going on. Caroline pleaded with Mr. Simms to let his granddaughter go, but Mr. Simms refused to do so until Cassie apologized to Lillian Jean. Cassie insisted that she had already apologized, but Caroline forced her to apologize again, which made Cassie humiliated and angry.

On the way home, Cassie wouldn't speak to her grandmother.

- a) *What significant choice does Caroline make in this scenario?*
- b) *What does Caroline's choice suggest about what she values?*

Scenario #5

Johnny Cade grew up on the wrong side of Tulsa, Oklahoma, the side where people were poorer and parents weren't always present. Johnny's parents were around, but they spent so much time fighting with each other and ignoring Johnny that he didn't spend much time at home. Instead, he hung out with his friends, who were far closer to his family than his parents ever could be.

Johnny and other kids from the East side often got into fights with the rich kids from the West side of town. A few months ago, Johnny had been walking home alone and he got jumped by some kids from the West side. They beat him pretty badly, and Johnny bought a switchblade, promising himself he would never get beaten that badly again.

A few weeks later, some drunk West side boys cornered Johnny and his friend, Ponyboy. Even though Johnny and Ponyboy hadn't done anything wrong, the West side boys attacked them, and they started to drown Ponyboy in a fountain. Johnny stabbed the boy who was holding Ponyboy's head underwater, after which the rest of the West side kids ran away. Afraid of getting arrested, Johnny and Ponyboy left town and hid in a church in the countryside.

One day Ponyboy and Johnny went to get some food, and when they came back to the church they found it was on fire. Not only that, but a school group was visiting and some kids were inside. Ponyboy and Johnny realized that one of their cigarettes might have started the fire. They rushed inside the church to try to save the kids stuck inside. During the attempted rescue, a beam fell on Johnny's back, breaking his spine.

- a) *What significant choice does Johnny make in this scenario?*
- b) *What does Johnny's choice suggest about what he values?*